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ABSTRACT

This module is the third of five integrated professional development modules for adult literacy and basic education (ALBE) personnel. This module is in the form of a 6-hour workshop, the purpose of which is to provide professional development for ALBE personnel in managing an ALBE learning environment. An overview consists of these components: duration, purpose, relationship to competency standards, prerequisites and/or corequisites, summary of content, delivery, list of learning outcomes, assessment criteria, minimum essential resources, and suggested references. Presenter's guidelines correlate content to the guidelines and resources in a three-column table format. The workshop resources section contains handouts, transparency masters, suggested resources, and workshop evaluation form. (YLB)

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Managing an ALBE Learning Environment

Module 3

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CE 071 316

Managing an ALBE Learning Environment
is Module 3 of the professional development course,
Inservice Program
for Adult Literacy and Basic Education Personnel,
a project of the TAFE National Staff Development Committee.

Module 3 was developed in the TAFE Professional Support Services Unit of the Northern Territory Department of Education.

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Module 3 Overview

Managing an ALBE Learning Environment

Duration

6 hours

Purpose

To provide professional development for Adult Literacy and Basic Education (ALBE) personnel in managing an ALBE learning environment.

Relationship to Competency Standards

Competency standards for ALBE teachers have not been established by a national body fully representing the profession. However the national project, "What is a Competent ABE Teacher?", undertaken by the University of Technology, Sydney has developed standards for the field.

Module 3 relates to the UTS Units of Competency 1, 3 and 7. (See pages 8 – 9.)

Prerequisites and/or Corequisites

Not applicable

Summary of Content

Methods of learner interaction according to learners' needs

Learning activities that are inclusive

Teaching practices that promote learning

Materials which are easy to read, understand and learn from

Learning strategies appropriate for adult learners

Delivery

Interactive workshop with some plenary, small group and individual activities, as set out in the Presenter's Guidelines.

As the workshop is designed using a Competency Based system of Training, there are several assessment tasks to be completed during the workshop and over the next six weeks. The coordinator will be responsible for sending a Statement of Achievement to each participant who completes all the assessment tasks to the standard required for this module.

Learning Outcomes

On completion of this module the participants will be able to:

1 select methods of learner interaction, eg 1:1, pairs, groups, whole class, according to learners' needs and learning objectives and the group dynamics

2 make adjustments to teaching strategies to accommodate learners' educational history, including learning difficulties

3 make adjustments to teaching strategies to accommodate cultural factors which affect students' learning styles and their expectations of teaching methodology

4 take account of gender differences as they affect prior learning, confidence and expectations of success

5 use a variety of teaching strategies and learning experiences to develop students' literacy and numeracy skills

6 select and use a variety of resources, including audio-visual and print materials, computers, places and people, in educationally productive ways

7 apply the principles of how adults learn.

Assessment Criteria

Assessment of the learning outcomes will be supervised by the presenter and/or coordinator of each workshop.

In addition to the tasks listed, the Participant's Profile allows for self-assessment of the learning outcomes.

The participants will complete the following assessment tasks. Those marked with an asterisk are to be submitted within six weeks of the workshop. They may be presented in brief journal or case study format.

1 Briefly justify, in terms of learner needs, a learner grouping you have used (to be written in point form only, during session 1.)

2 Briefly indicate how you accommodated learner differences in one teaching/learning situation (to be written in point form only, after session 1.)

*3 List a number of teaching/learning strategies you have used with your own class(es). Evaluate how successful they were.

*4 Provide an example of a task or text and show how you adapted it to suit the identified learning needs of your student(s).

*5 Record a teaching strategy you have used which is especially appropriate for adult learners. Evaluate how successful it was.

Minimum Essential Resources

- board or overhead projector and pens
- Resources 1 to 17 which can be photocopied back-to-back to be handed out in a folder
- Resource 18, "Evaluation of the Workshop", which is copied separately so that it can be handed back after it has been filled in, at the end of the workshop.

Suggested References

Adult Literacy Teaching: A Professional Development Course (1992) TAFE•TEQ Language and Literacy Centre Queensland

Beattie S (1991) *Moving From Strength to Strength: A Self Paced Professional Development Package for Teachers of Adult Literacy and Numeracy* Faculty of Education University of Technology Sydney

Eagleson R transcribed by Susan Sim (1988) "Plain English Initiatives" *Literacy Exchange* June pp 23–31

Equity Inclusive Curriculum Guidelines (1990) DEVET WA

McCormack R & Pancini G (1991)*Learning to Learn: Introducing Adults to the Culture, Context and Conventions of Knowledge. A guide for teachers* Footscray College of TAFE

Thiering J, Hatherly S & McLeod J (1992) *Teaching Vocational Mathematics* NCVER

Writing and Teaching to Improve Literacy: Plain English in Practice (1991) Human Resource Development Division NSW TAFE

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Resource 12	*Working Together* (1990) NSW Department of TAFE
Resource 13	*Working Together* (1990) NSW Department of TAFE
Resource 14	*Writing and Teaching to Improve Literacy: Plain English in Practice* (1991) Human Resource Development Division NSW TAFE

Managing an ALBE Learning Environment

Presenter's Guidelines

- Introduction 121
- Methods of learner interaction according to learners' needs 121
- Learning activities that are inclusive, eg culture, gender and equity 123
- Teaching practices that promote learning 124
- Recognising and producing materials which are easy to read, understand and learn from 126
- Learning strategies appropriate for adult learners 127
- Workshop evaluation 128

CONTENT	PRESENTER'S GUIDELINES	RESOURCES
SESSION 1 (1 hour 40 minutes)	Times given are suggestions only.	
1.1 Introduction (20 minutes)	• Give very brief background about yourself. • Make sure participants know each other's names and identify their teaching areas. • Acknowledge the expertise of the group.	
	• Explain aim, and assessment task procedures. Give name and address and due date for task which is to be submitted within 6 weeks.	**Resource 1 –** "Assessment Tasks"
	• Fill in Participant's Profile (column 1 only)	**Resource 2 –** "Participant's Profile"
1.2 Methods of learner interaction according to learners' needs (30 minutes)	Group discussion – the advantages and disadvantages of various class groupings. Brainstorm list on board.	
• What do you find are the advantages and disadvantages of various class groupings?	**Focus question for Resources 3 and 4** *How could seating arrangements overcome some of the problems mentioned in the case studies?*	**Resource 3 –** "Case Study: Elaine" **Resource 4–** "Case Study Extracts"

	Participants use the focus question (see previous page) to draw out the teaching points. **Teaching Points** • advantages/disadvantages of: a whole group situation, pairs or small groups 1:1 tuition simultaneous 1:1 tuition of several students • group dynamics: organiser, scribe personality clashes • discussion versus chalk and talk • level of demand on teachers in different groupings.	
▶ **ASSESSMENT TASK**	Participants are to justify briefly, in terms of learner needs, a learner grouping which they have used. (To be written in point form only and submitted during the workshop, at the end of the group discussion.)	

1.3 Learning activities that are inclusive, eg culture, gender and equity (50 minutes) • What practices have you found that are an aid to student learning and which take account of: gender cultural differences educational background socio-economic status disability, etc?	Compile a list of strategies/activities which provide opportunities for all learners and acknowledge their backgrounds. The case studies can provide a focus for discussion. **Teaching Points** • supportive environment • identification of stereotypes • demonstration versus explanation • inclusive language • appropriate terms for racial or ethnic groups. • contextualising learning activities • cross-cultural factors which affect teaching/learning styles, eg prestige given to writing in our society • student-teacher relationships: casual or formal? • variety in learning tasks, both concrete and abstract • individual and group activities	**Resource 5 –** "Case Study: Lee" **Resource 6 –** "Case Study: Eva" **Resource 7 –** "Case Study: Peter" **Resource 8 –** "Case Study: Nadia"
▶ **ASSESSMENT TASK**	Participants will briefly indicate how they accommodated learner differences, in one teaching situation. (To be written in point form only and submitted after Session 1.)	

SESSION 2 (1 hour 30 minutes)		
2 **Teaching practices that promote learning** (90 minutes) • What classroom practices have you found which are an aid to learning?	Prepare an OHP transparency of the focus questions for Resources 9, 10 and 11 in advance. After participants have discussed all the case studies in Resources 9, 10 and 11 in small groups, use the focus questions to draw out the teaching points in a plenary session. **Teaching Points** • need for knowledge of both the concepts involved and the language used • explanation of new vocabulary items • demonstrations, practical work, and/or relevant excursions before the reading of complicated texts (continued on next page)	**Resource 9 –** "Case Study: Simon" **Focus question:** *How has the ALBE teacher used the prior knowledge of the learner? Is this a sound strategy?* **Resource 10 –** "Case Study Extracts" **Focus question:** *What teaching strategies are being used to promote learning?* **Resource 11 –** "Case Study: Marlene" **Focus question:** *What teaching strategies might assist the learner in this situation?*

	Teaching Points (continued) • strategies for literacy learning: access to a range of genres transfer of language skills between contexts relationship between genre and the lexical and grammatical choices prediction of stages in texts of different genres joint construction of written texts with learners, ie scaffolding role of language related to purpose • connection between previous and current topics • writers using their own experiences to illustrate points • reassurance that all people find some writing tasks difficult • learner input.	
▶ **ASSESSMENT TASK**	Participants will: • list a number of teaching/learning strategies they have used with their own classes. • evaluate how successful the strategies were. (The assessment task may be presented in a brief journal or case study format and be submitted within 6 weeks of the workshop.)	

SESSION 3 (1 hour 30 minutes)		
3 **Recognising and producing materials which are easy to read, understand and learn from** (90 minutes) • What factors make materials more readable?	Group discussion. Brainstorm list on whiteboard. Walk through Resources 12, 13 and 14. Use them as a basis for discussion to bring out the teaching points. **Teaching Points** • organisation of content • Plain English practices • similarities and differences between grammatically intricate spoken language and lexically dense written language • unnecessary and necessary technical language • using graphics and illustrations to assist learning • characteristics of experienced/inexperienced readers. **Focus question for Resource 15:** *What resources do you use to promote effective learning?*	**Resource 12 –** "Guidelines for Writing in Plain English" **Resource 13 –** "Towards Writing Better Handouts" **Resource 14 –** "Characteristics of Good and Poor Readers" **Focus question for Resources 12, 13 and 14:** *Do the materials you expect your learners to read encourage, or even allow them to use good reading strategies?* **Resource 15 –** "Case Study: Computer Literacy"
▶ **ASSESSMENT TASK**	Participants are to provide an example of a task or text and show how it was adapted it to suit the students' identified learning needs. (To be submitted within 6 weeks of workshop.)	

SESSION 4 (1 hour)		
4.1 Learning strategies appropriate for adult learners (60 minutes) • How do adults learn?	Ask the group to consider what changes/adjustments they would need to make to their lives if they were to take up the study of a new skill now. Small groups read and discuss Resource 16 and analyse the adult learning strategies that come out of it. Participants then make a personal list of three features of adult education which they consider most important. In their small groups they discuss their lists and the reasons why they selected these features. In a plenary session draw out the teaching points. **Teaching Points** • awareness of articulation and learning pathways • negotiation of planning/designing learning activities • feedback in reshaping the purpose and direction of a session or lesson (continued on next page)	**Resource 16** – "Case Study: An Adult Learning"

	Teaching Points (continued) • inclusion of the learners' personal experiences in lesson content • the group as a resource • awareness that goals and directions may change and new ones may emerge as people become clearer about what it is they want to learn.	
▶ **ASSESSMENT TASK**	Participants will record a teaching strategy they have used which is especially appropriate for adult learners and evaluate how successful it was. (The assessment task can be presented in a brief journal or case study format, based on each participant's own classes. To be submitted within 6 weeks of the workshop.)	
4.2 Workshop evaluation (10 minutes)	Draw participants' attention to the list of references for their use after the workshop. Remind them to fill in column 2 of the Participant's Profile as soon as possible. Ask them to fill in Resource 18 and hand it in before they leave.	**Resource 17 –** "Suggested References" **Resource 2** **Resource 18 –** "Evaluation of the Workshop"

Managing an ALBE Learning Environment

Resource 1

Assessment Tasks

listed as they will occur on the day

To be submitted during Session 1 (in point form only):

- Briefly justify, in terms of learner needs, a learner grouping you have used.
- Briefly indicate how you accommodated learner differences in one teaching/learning situation.

To be submitted within 6 weeks of the workshop:

- List a number of teaching/learning strategies you have used with your own class(es). Evaluate how successful they were.
- Provide an example of a task or text and show how you have adapted it to suit the identified learning needs of your student(s).
- Record a teaching strategy you have used which is especially appropriate for adult learners. Evaluate how successful it was.

Participants who complete all the assessment tasks will receive a Statement of Achievement for Module 3.

Send completed Assessment Tasks to Workshop Coordinator:

Name .....

Address .....

.....

.....

Date Due .....

Resource 2

Participant's Profile

Unit 3: Managing an ALBE Learning Environment

Please rate yourself against the learning outcomes on a scale of 0 – 6.
A rating of 0 signifies no experience or ability in the area.
A rating of 6 implies that you have a high level of skill.

LEARNING OUTCOMES	BEFORE WORKSHOP	AFTER WORKSHOP	3–6 MONTHS LATER
I select methods of learner interaction, eg 1:1, pairs, groups, whole class, according to learners' needs and learning objectives and the group dynamics.			
I make adjustments to teaching strategies to accommodate learners' educational history, including learning difficulties.			
I make adjustments to teaching strategies to accommodate cultural factors which affect students' learning styles and their expectations of teaching methodology.			
I take account of gender differences as they affect prior learning, confidence and expectations of success.			
I use a variety of teaching strategies and learning experiences to develop students' literacy and numeracy skills.			
I select and use a variety of resources, including audio-visual and print materials, computers, places and people, in educationally productive ways.			
I apply the principles of how adults learn.			

Resource 3

Case Study: Elaine

Elaine has had twelve years teaching experience in urban high schools. She recounts some of her early experiences coming into adult education.

One of the first things I discovered was that something as simple as the arrangement of the tables in a room can be absolutely critical for the success of a class. I was in the habit of walking into a room and accepting the seating arrangement left from the previous class.

I found the arrangement often frustrated what I was trying to do. Sometimes the tables would be set out so that some learners had their backs to the whiteboard. When the discussion focused on a diagram on the board they didn't feel comfortable about moving their chairs to a new position. Often they would half turn in their chairs, or stretch their necks around instead. Sometimes they didn't have the courage to turn around at all, especially in the early sessions; they just sat facing away from the focus of discussion.

The arrangement of the room: small group, teacher-focused, circular, whole-class, became part of my lesson planning and preparation.

The first time I took an adult education class I arranged the chairs in a circle so that everyone could see each other and everyone could participate. I felt this would help the learners to quickly get to know each other, feel more comfortable about the class and help with networking.

Several weeks into the course, when the learners were more settled and confident, we looked back on that first session. The learners had felt overwhelmingly that they were always in the spotlight, under constant surveillance by myself and the rest of the class. Some felt so uncomfortable they couldn't remember a thing from the first session at all. And I thought I had done really well, drawing out a bit of information about each learner to be shared amongst the group. Where I thought I was giving each learner a chance to feel important and have an equal say, they felt they were being put on the spot.

Now I begin my classes with small groups. The learners quickly get to know and bond with a few other students. They feel as if they have a safe place in the class and can contribute safely to a discussion.

Resource 4

Case Study Extracts

The following extracts are drawn from interviews with adult learners in a Northern Territory TAFE college.

Ah yes! I found quite a few problems in the first year with the teacher that I had then. There was a reason for it I'm sure. The class was too big. There were between 12 and 14 in the class and it was too big and there were people in the class that were quite advanced—and that's fine. I think that's good—having mixed classes—because again, we that are coming up from the bottom can look at these things. But I found, firstly, too much time was spent with people who were doing very difficult things and not enough with people who were still struggling—'cos you get "off the ground", sort of, with the learning.

I don't like it when the classes get too big. I found in a few classes, once you get over ten it's really too many, simply because of the time element. You have to wait a long time then—although you can be doing something else—and you are perhaps not learning what you want at the time. I have found that a bit frustrating.

I enjoy coming back mainly because I know I am going to learn something. I know it's definitely not a waste of time and I'm going to learn something that is beneficial to me and I enjoy learning in the group situation. I think it is much more interesting in a group situation than having private lessons.

Resource 5

Case Study: Lee

Lee is an experienced ALBE practitioner. The extract below is taken from a survey she conducted on Adult Literacy, targeting recognition of professional development for practitioners in the ALBE field.

ALBE practitioners are being asked increasingly to deliver programs to clients from a range of backgrounds including: NESB, disabled, mature age, youth, Aboriginal, distance education, single parents and/or aged, each with their own assumptions about learning and literacy and each with their individual social agenda.

Prior to taking on a position as an ALBE practitioner I conducted a number of interviews with teachers already working in the field. They frequently expressed frustration at the outdated, prevailing assumptions about adults as learners, assumptions that do not take into account the variety of their backgrounds and special needs.

Resource 6

Case Study: Eva

Peter is an experienced ALBE practitioner. He presents the following case study based on an ALBE class drawn from NESB learners.

Eva is an example of a student with a specific learning style. I had the opportunity to reconcile this with the learning styles of the other members of the group—Thai, Vietnamese, Chinese and Filipino. Eva was 26 years old, from Eastern Europe. She had been a midwife in her country.

In Eva's case there were personality and attitude factors as well as her particular cognitive learning style. First, Eva approached her task with the utmost seriousness and felt that the learning style of the group was too trivial. The others were patient with her and willing to persist with her.

Eva was not as communicative as the others in the class. There was no sense of independent negotiation with her colleagues or the teacher. It was as if she was holding herself back from any involvement in the society of the class in which she saw herself as a "migrant". Even though her learning style was not communicative, at least she was able to express herself to me as the teacher.

Eva was highly analytical. She was able to grasp grammatical concepts very quickly and I occasionally gave her a tutoring role when the group was working in pairs, though I am not sure how much of her insight she was able to impart to the other students.

In spite of having such good analytical ability she was not able to discuss or negotiate meaning. She was authority oriented. In her case the authority was not the teacher, but her bi-lingual dictionary or the language learning textbooks she had brought from her country.

I invited her to show me any writing she might do so that I could give her feedback and suggest ways of upgrading her writing skills. However, she felt upset if I pointed out any areas that needed improvement and she preferred to submit her texts as finished products which needed no further negotiation.

Case Study: Peter

Peter was employed as an ALBE teacher in a workplace situation. Before he moved into this position he had spent several years teaching ALBE classes at the Institute of TAFE.

My ALBE class consisted of a mixture of ethnic/aged learners. They attended ALBE classes in working hours, at the request of their employer.

I initially set a group of chairs out in a semicircle arrangement, where I was sitting very close to the group. In no time at all they had moved their chairs back to a 'respectful' distance from me. They preferred a very traditional classroom seating arrangement which I accepted, as I did not want to put up any further barriers.

As a group of learners they were very passive, quiet and totally accepting of anything I had to say. They avoided anything personal in their contributions and always treated me with an exaggerated respect. In all of our group discussions it was obvious that they did not consider they were conversational equals with me.

I was at a loss as to how I could draw them into many of the learning activities I felt would benefit them.

Resource 8

Case Study: Nadia

Nadia is a twenty-seven year old student originally from Eastern Europe. The case study is written from the perspective of the ALBE teacher.

Nadia appeared to be a very quiet student. I put this down to her being inhibited about her accent which was quite thick and at times hard to understand. Realising this, she tended to avoid as much oral work as possible. She sat in class diligently taking notes lesson after lesson, but never asked for help and never produced any item to share with the rest of the group.

After several lessons I attempted to draw her into a small group. I asked her, 'Can you write a summary of the group's discussion?'

'Yes', she replied easily. I then left the group to work on its own for the full session as I was anxious not to appear to be pressuring Nadia. I observed that Nadia was drawn into the group's discussion. At the end of the session, however, she had no written notes to show.

I made no comment, but in the next session I again encouraged her to take on a written task. 'Can you make a list of all the new words that come out of today's discussion?'

'Yes', she said easily. But again, at the end of the lesson there was no list. I found an opportunity during the coffee break to have a chat with her, fishing for a clue as to her reluctance to put pen to paper.

'Are you having a problem with any of the work we are doing at the moment?'

'No'.

'Can I help you with anything we are doing during the lessons?'

Nadia exploded. 'Of course you can! You are the teacher! Do you think I am stupid not to know this?' Her anger was genuine. I realised my teaching had missed the mark on two levels: Nadia's learning experiences had been with authoritarian teachers; and she was responding to my questions **literally**.

I changed my questions to 'I want you to . . . '

Resource 9

Case Study: Simon

Simon is in his late twenties and has enrolled in an ALBE course at a TAFE college. He always had a lot of difficulties at school and left at a very early age. His memories of school are of fighting teachers over 'routine', and of constant absences brought on by boredom.

Well I find—yeah, the occasional demonstration by the teacher. If the teacher finds we as a class—if there a few of us that have the same problem then yeah, I reckon a demonstration is great. No, I don't think a lesson is needed because usually the teacher will give us a talk when she is demonstrating anyway— and yeah, one-to-one discussion with the teacher is good. And yes, basically the students do get together and discuss our projects and how we did this or how we did that or what are we going to do here and—yeah, I like to be left alone to discover things.

I don't believe that as adults we should have structured lessons because I think you can learn more by doing your own thing and if you have a problem the teacher is available to help you and guide you because each one of us handles a problem in a different way. Some of us are able to do it ourselves and sort out the problem, whereas some of us might not be able to. We're all at different levels. If I find that I can't quite master something then I will leave it for a little while, go onto something different and then take a fresh look back at that problem and try and solve it myself. Then if I can't, that's where the teacher's help is very valuable, because basically the teacher's teaching us anyway. In the two years that I have been here I've learnt tremendous things. I'd find that if I had a problem and I kept plodding away at it, and I found I was going to let it beat me and I felt I wasn't getting anywhere then I would say to the teacher, 'Can you please teach me how to do this?'.

I think we learn more with everybody doing something different. The teacher might be showing one person something that the rest of us are not doing. We listen in, and perhaps it's something new that we've never heard of, so we learn something too.

Resource 10

Case Study Extracts

The following comments are from discussions with adult learners attending classes in various ALBE centres, on their experiences with different teachers, and their preferred teaching styles.

I think firstly, being shown how to do something but not being sort of talked down to, it's sort of a—when we're shown how to do something correctly it's made almost like a fun group sort of thing— being part of the group, and as I say for myself, I find it much easier if I actually see something done than just hearing about it. I do really enjoy the fact that it is a social interaction which I find is really nice relaxing company.

Then when I come to read about it later, the next week or so, then it's easier to follow the instructions—lots of books like to use the big technical words, they put you off real fast, but if you saw it being done you don't worry about those words. You remember what they refer to.

Well, it's still a bit of a problem because most of these patterns seem to be written for experts. Their language is sometimes—I know I've seen other people struggle with it too. You read and you think, 'What the hell does that mean?' and you read it again and sometimes you can work through it, but it's a bit frustrating and it takes a long time—which sometimes is just a simple little thing and it's the way they have worded it. I don't feel they've always worded it easily enough.

And probably the other thing that I disliked about that year—I like to be shown something and then try it perhaps. I think that's the real learning process of things: to be either told or shown and then do it. I don't like the work to be taken off me and actually done for me and I've got really no idea how to do it the second time, and that was happening quite a bit in the first year, but I've really appreciated the change of teaching in the second year. That seems to be the way that I'm happy to go: see what somebody is doing, and then do it, and check that it's right or have it shown to me again. I want to know how to do it but I don't want it done for me.

Case Study: Marlene

Marlene is twenty years old. She arrived from Yugoslavia with her parents at the age of ten. Most of her schooling, except the first three years, was done in Australia. She left school at fifteen. Her parents speak very little English at home, but Marlene's English is fluent. In class she communicates well and reads well. She is able to copy accurately.

Her written English is not good at all. Her sentence structure is very poor, her sentences are often mixed up or incomplete and she quite often uses words incorrectly. Spelling is also a problem area.

Marlene sat for some written assessment tests . Her answers showed that she often did not understand what was being asked of her.

Resource 12

Guidelines For Writing In Plain English

	BEFORE	AFTER
1 Avoid negative words in instructions.	*Do not disassemble the apparatus.*	*Leave the apparatus assembled.*
2 Use concrete and familiar words for abstract, unfamiliar words.	*commence* *magnitude* *adjacent* *determine* *sufficient length* *ensure that*	*start* *size* *next to* *find out* *make long enough* *make sure that*
3 Leave out unnecessary words and expressions.	*In order to accomplish effective cleansing of the skin...*	*To clean the skin properly...*
4 Write as if you were speaking to your student, eg use 'you' and active rather than passive verbs.	*Before attempting a permanent wave, it is necessary to carefully analyse the client's scalp and hair condition.*	*Before you attempt a permanent wave, you need to carefully analyse the client's scalp and hair condition.*
5 Replace abstract nouns with verbs.	*The existence of this pressure can be demonstrated by a simple experiment.*	*You can show that this pressure exists by a simple experiment.*
6 Avoid long-winded sentences. Break them down into shorter, clearer sentences (one piece of information per sentence).	*The stratified epithelium of the epidermis is superficially converted into cornified material which is continually being worn away by usage and continually being replaced by proliferation from the deeper strata.*	*The outside layer (stratified epithelium) of the epidermis is made up of dead cells. When you wash yourself, you remove this layer of dead cells. These cells are then replaced by new cells. These new cells are made through cell division. Cell division happens deeper in the epidermis layer.*
7 Order sentences—so first steps are placed first.	*Before turning the wheel around on any tractor, check the operation manual.*	*Check your operation manual before you turn the wheels around on any tractor.*

Resource 13

Towards Writing Better Handouts

A When preparing a handout, the overall appearance should invite the student to read. Consider the following points:

1 an open layout;

2 clear heading and sub-headings;

3 signal important points with:

(a) numerals and letters
(b) indentation
(c) bold print
(d) variety of print size
(e) capitals
(f) underlining.

B Our visual memory is very effective, so wherever possible use graphics such as:

(a) diagrams and illustrations
(b) cartoons
(c) pie charts
(d) bar graphs
(e) pictographs
(f) flow charts and tree charts
(g) maps and plans.

C Encourage students to use their handouts actively by:

(a) underlining or highlighting the points they know
(b) circling the points they don't understand
(c) labelling diagrams
(d) completing crosswords
(e) completing cloze exercises
(f) summarising information into a few sentences
(g) summarising information into charts, flow charts, tree diagrams and/or graphs.

D Help students organise handouts into some order for future revision by including the following:

(a) subject heading
(b) topic name or handout title
(c) number of handout in the sequence
(d) teacher's name
(e) date

E At all times use clear everyday language, ie Plain English.

Resource 14

Characteristics of Good and Poor Readers

GOOD READERS	POOR READERS
• **Look for meaning** in the print in front of them. They expect it to make sense.	• **Don't expect** print to have **meaning** for them.
• **Read in chunks.** They focus on meaning, not on every letter or every word.	• **Don't question** what they read.
• Constantly **guess or predict** what's coming next. They use the text to confirm their predictions.	• **Don't guess or predict** sensibly.
• Infer the meaning of unknown words or phrases from the **context**.	• **Rarely use the context** to help them understand difficult words or phrases.
• **Keep reading.** They skim over words or phrases they don't understand, unless these stop them from making sense of the print.	• **Stop reading** if they come across a word or phrase they can't read or don't understand.
• **Read in different ways,** depending on what they're reading and why they're reading it. They only pay attention to what is relevant to their purpose.	• **Always read in the same way,** regardless of what they're reading or why they're reading it. They read everything, relevant or not.

Resource 15

Case Study: Computer Literacy

By kind permission of Gordon Inskip

Gordon Inskip has been an ALBE teacher in the Northern Territory for many years. he shares his experiences in computer-aided learning.

I began using computers four years ago as an experiment in an evening literacy class for adults run by the NT Open College of TAFE, Palmerston.

A classroom fitted with Apple 2Es happened to be available. I decided to try the possibility of accelerating written expression by putting aside the motor problem of bad handwriting, which often compounds the problem, and concentrating on the intellectual skills of vocabulary building, spelling, sentence and paragraph construction, and the development of style. The computer, through the keyboard, separates these two aspects of literacy and I felt that comprehension and fluent expression were more imperative needs than neat calligraphy.

The response pleasantly surprised me. I found that even on a 2E, which is not a very **friendly** computer, very inexperienced writers could learn, in anything from twenty minutes to a couple of hours, the basic operations of word processing.

They quickly lost their fear of mistakes spoiling their work, which had previously inhibited them when working on paper because it meant the drudgery of rewriting, and they put their thoughts on the screen, confident that errors could be easily corrected. From then on they could concentrate on what they were producing and enjoy the task of creating prose with mounting control over what they were doing.

I asked them to think of a relative or friend they had not seen for some time and write them a letter. As they worked, I circulated, suggesting topics when they ran dry of ideas, pointing out corrections and adjusting layouts. Most of the letters were short and took two or three evenings to complete. They were then printed, envelopes provided and addressed, and the letters posted. Sending letters is a novel experience for inexperienced writers. They enjoyed the sense of achievement and were obviously motivated to persevere.

As Macintosh computers replaced 2Es in classrooms, greater possibilities opened. I found that students could quickly learn the commands for centring, indentation of paragraphs, change of font, italics and bold lettering to enhance the presentation of their work. The Mac makes all these operations easy.

I adopted the technique while circulating of sitting beside the learner, taking over the mouse and using the I-bar as a pointer on the screen. The learners follow the I-bar as I go through what they have written. I indicate errors of spelling and punctuation and suggest where modifications of style, sentence and paragraph construction are appropriate. This gives immediate feedback on changes. There is no red ink, and no need to rewrite. The learners carry out all the corrections on the keyboard and my interventions dissolve into their own work. So they retain complete sense of possession and control. This is important. When each piece is printed at the end of the session, the learners must feel that it represents their own efforts and achievement.

Because they have so little experience of composition, people who are not practised in writing have intense difficulty recognising their own ideas as material for written expression. Neither do they have any concept of structure in written work. Confronted with a topic to write about, they lack techniques for gathering ideas, breaking them down into components of a story, shaping an argument or devising introductions and endings. Every literate person knows the frustration and confusion of a blank mind: for people developing their literacy skills this problem is particularly baffling.

To surmount this initial barrier, I now begin by asking them to write about the one subject that has volumes of material to work on and its own natural structure—their own life. I direct them to type their name in bold capitals, centred at the top of the page, then revert to normal font, indented and justified on one-and-half line spacing and write:

I was born in...

While they are solving these problems of formatting they are preoccupied with achieving control of the computer. They make mistakes, but the evidence of their own mastery eventually appears on the screen, reassuring them they have succeeded and motivating them to continue. If they prefer to open in some other way, or wish to go back and change the title and opening after they have started, they are encouraged to do so.

Once on a computer, learners are working at their own level. As the story progresses learners discover how to elaborate their own ideas. As they go back over their work, they recognise for themselves that what they have written does not fully express what they visualised, so they experiment to make improvements. The computer's power to present modified work **always in completed form** invites constant revision.

Learning that process—experimenting with words and discovering the way vocabulary and structure capture precise meaning, is central to achieving literacy. Because they are writing of actual experience, they have a strong drive to record it as fully as they can. The computer makes possible development from within the existing work without destroying what has been achieved so far, so learners are not burdened with the constant feeling of having to make fresh starts with the arrival of new ideas.

Most adult literacy students have had long and bitter experience of failure with pen and paper. A computer print-out of even a few sentences is a presentable achievement that boosts confidence. Learners are invited to continue their stories by making homework notes of ideas in the space below what they have written so far. Knowing they can tidy up on the screen whatever they put down motivates most learners to do this.

These notes make the basis of the next class session.

Resource 16

Case Study: An Adult Learning

By kind permission of Rae Flanagan

Rae Flanagan is an experienced teacher who has been teaching in ALBE centres in Victoria and the Northern Territory for several years. Below she recounts her own experience as an adult learner.

Almost three years ago I decided to learn the viola in the hope of eventually playing in a symphony orchestra. I did not think it would be too difficult because I was motivated, could already play the piano and had some experience of playing in small groups. The opportunity to learn with an excellent teacher arose and so I took up the challenge. Everything seemed in place to transfer my prior knowledge to a new situation. I knew the theory, but I was unprepared for the emotional aspects which intruded upon so much of the practice. What has emerged from the experience—sometimes slowly, sometimes painfully—is a more profound understanding of those issues which are common to many adult learners.

To begin with, the whole exercise requires **courage**. Not just once or twice but constantly. Every time I go to a lesson or perform at an exam, I am taking a risk. The nerves, the stress, the anxiety and the physical trembling I experience are also known to those who have come back to study after years in "the world" and find they must deliver an oral presentation or read their own work aloud to the whole class. It is truly terrifying. And yet from these moments grow a new kind of self confidence and awareness. The risk taking begins to empower and brings change.

This may become the biggest problem for adult learners because this **change** affects other people and they don't always feel comfortable with the "new" you—the one who is interested in different things, who doesn't believe it's too late to make up for the missed opportunities of adolescence. Suddenly the one thing that is not an acceptable topic of conversation is your study. Often it is totally ignored and, as a consequence, you seek out the solidarity of newly discovered kindred spirits rather than those you perceive as "non-risk takers"; the ones sensible enough to stay home at night and watch TV instead of practising the viola or anguishing over an assignment.

Sometimes there is "failure". It is embarrassing not being able to understand, not improving as you envisaged, not being able to keep up with others. Dropping out appears welcoming and safe and the support of other students and teachers is paramount while the demons of self doubt appear to be in control. Occasionally you may need to acknowledge that you have indeed chosen something that is beyond you. You may need to reassess your goals and re-examine your motives. In spite of my enthusiasm, I have not achieved at the rate I expected. Every now and then I play a few notes which sound how I want all my playing to sound, but these moments are rare. I have had to learn patience.

I have also learned the **value of looking back** to where I have come from, not merely ahead to my ultimate goal. I can sometimes gain the strength to endure current frustrations by playing a piece from Book One and realising how far I've come. This reflection is a basic principle of successful adult learning because time is not limitless. I don't have twenty years to perfect my new craft and each day I am more aware of its complexities.

Just as those students of literacy must grapple with the demands of structure, grammar, spelling, presentation etc, so the string player considers the fingers, wrist, elbow and shoulder positions of the left hand, while also trying to be aware of the speed and place of the bow in the right. And it's all supposed to be happening simultaneously!

Often my mind simply registers "overload" because it cannot deal with such a myriad of commands. The experience is somewhat akin to the first lesson on a computer when one might merely want to learn how to open a file and save it, but instead is bombarded with a seemingly endless list of technological options, most of which go straight over your head. So it is with adult beginners. We may need to be told the same thing many times, because it will not be meaningful until we are ready to learn it. There may be too much else happening, too many other considerations crowding in on our consciousness.

All these issues make the attitude of the teacher enormously important. Adults need someone who understands the stages of the learning process and can create an environment which is challenging but not threatening. The line between the two is subtle but vital and therefore requires skill and experience.

There must also be recognition of what is involved in putting yourself on the line at every lesson and an appreciation that what is brought to the classroom is your **whole self**—not just the writing "bit" or the music "bit".

This may be at odds with some teachers' view of their roles in the education process. It may be uncomfortable for them to acknowledge that a group of adults in the classroom will be dealing with more than the learning of a specific skill. They will be attempting to transfer a lifetime of "other" knowledge into a particular format. They will be analysing, realising, confronting and changing.

And the teacher must be prepared to do the same.

Suggested References

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Beattie S (1991) *Moving From Strength to Strength: A Self Paced Professional Development Package for Teachers of Adult Literacy and Numeracy* Faculty of Education University of Technology Sydney

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Equity Inclusive Curriculum Guidelines (1990) DEVET WA

McCormack R & Pancini G (1991)*Learning to Learn: Introducing Adults to the Culture, Context and Conventions of Knowledge. A guide for teachers* Footscray College of TAFE

Thiering J, Hatherly S & McLeod J (1992) *Teaching Vocational Mathematics* NCVER

Writing and Teaching to Improve Literacy: Plain English in Practice (1991) Human Resource Development Division NSW TAFE

Resource 18

Evaluation of the Workshop
Managing an ALBE Learning Environment

1 What particular aspects of this workshop did you find helpful?

2 What aspects were least useful or helpful to you?

3 What would you change, or like to see presented differently?

4 What future inservice/extension/support would you like to see arising from this workshop?

5 Any other comments?